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Translated from the Aramaic

By

HERMANN GOLLANCZ, D.Lit.,

*smid Professor of Hebrew, University College, University of London.*

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# INTRODUCTION.

## The Targum to the "Song of Songs."

Whatever theories have been advanced in the past, or may still be advanced with regard to the scope and meaning of the "Song of Songs" itself, there can be no doubt as to the character of the Aramaic version, a translation of which is given in this volume. The word "version" is scarcely the correct term; we should rather anticipate and say at once that it is a paraphrase, and just such a paraphrase as will set at rest any conjecture as to what the author himself (whoever he was) thought with regard to the original purpose of this fascinating smaller book of the Bible which he endeavoured to elucidate.

The Targum-paraphrase of the Books of the Bible, included in the term "Kethubim" or "Hagiographa," was for a time attributed to one named José or Joseph, surnamed "the Blind," Chief of a Rabbinical Seminary at Sura in the third century;

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but it has since been proved that the Targums of the several books of the Hagiographa owe their origin to various authors. The Targumist of the "Song" was evidently not troubled with any theories as to whether it had a literal, mystical, or allegorical meaning. After all, there was consistency in the forms and expressions employed in the original; the name of King Solomon did appear in the course of the Book, and the pastoral character as regards scenery and language was quite in keeping with the supposition of Solomon's authorship of it. But the real question for him to determine was, what the original author intended the Book to be, whether "a bridal drama and song," "a pastoral eclogue," "a dramatic poem," or "an epithalamium of a pastoral kind," to be taken seriously and in its literal sense; or, on the other hand, whether the author himself regarded it merely as the framework upon which to construct some higher and wider conception.

Judging from internal evidence, the writer of this elaborate Aramaic paraphrase clearly favoured the latter view, that adopted in Rabbinic Tradition,

in which "the beloved" is taken to mean "God," and "the bride" to mean "the Congregation of Israel"; for his version from beginning to end excludes any *literal* interpretation of the Song. In a word, the Targumist handles the "Song of Songs" as an allegorical outline of Jewish history from the Exodus to the coming of the Messiah and the expected building of the third Temple. "In the Christian Church the Talmudical interpretation imported by Origen was all but universally received. . . . The strongest argument on the side of the allegorists is the matrimonial metaphor so frequently employed in the Scriptures to describe the relation between God and Israel."

We need go no further than the Targumist's paraphrase of the very first words of the Song, "the Song of Songs which is Solomon's," to prove that his intention was to give the fullest and widest application to the words of his original. He accordingly enumerates eight songs before he comes to the "ninth song," sung by Solomon, King of Israel, and even refers to a "tenth song," to be sung by the Children of the Exile in the days to come.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples in this brief introduction, as a perusal of the translation will show in a more satisfactory manner how the author, writing in the Aramaic dialect, set himself the task of supplying the Song of Songs of the Bible with a running Hagadic or allegorical commentary.

# The Targum to the "Song of Songs,"

(TRANSLATED FROM THE ARAMAIC).

## CHAPTER I.

v. 1.—*The song of songs, which is Solomon's.*

The songs and praises which Solomon, the prophet, King of Israel, spake by virtue of the spirit of prophecy before the Lord, Sovereign of the Universe.

Ten songs were (at various times) uttered in this world. The best of all these was this one. The *first*, at the time when Adam received pardon for his guilt, on the Sabbath-day which came to shield him. It was then that he opened his mouth and said: "A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath-day" (Ps. xcii).

The *second* song was uttered by Moses and the Children of Israel at the time when the Lord of the Universe divided for them the waters of the Red Sea; they all began to sing together, as it is written: "Then sang Moses and the Children of Israel" (Ex. xv. 1).

The *third* song the Children of Israel sang at the time when the well of water was given to them, as it is written, "Then sang Israel" (Numb. xxi. 17).

The *fourth* song was uttered by Moses, the prophet, when his hour had arrived to depart from the world, and he took occasion to reprove the people of Israel by its means, as it is said, "Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak" (Deut. xxxii. 1).

The *fifth* song was spoken by Joshua, the son of Nun, when he waged war in Gibeon, and the sun and moon stood still during 36 hours, and they thus interrupted their habit of sounding the praises (of the Creator); whereupon Joshua opened his mouth, and sang the praises of God, as Scripture states, "Thus sang Joshua before the Lord" (*Cf.* Josh. x. 12).

The *sixth* song was that of Barak and Deborah, on the day when the Lord delivered Sisera and his camp into the hands of the Children of Israel, as it is written, "Then sang Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam" (Judges v. 1).

The *seventh* song was spoken by Hannah, when a son was granted her by Heaven, as Scripture

testifies, "And Hannah prayed (in prophecy) and said" (1 Sam. ii. 1).

The *eighth* song did David, King of Israel, sing for all the miracles which God had wrought on his behalf, as it is stated, "And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song" (2 Sam. xxii. 1) by virtue of the prophetic spirit.

The *ninth* song was sung by Solomon, King of Israel, by means of the Holy Spirit, before the Lord, Sovereign of the Universe.

And the *tenth* song will once be sung by the Children of the Exile, at the time when they shall be redeemed from captivity, as it is expressly stated by the hand of Isaiah, the prophet, "This song ye shall have for joy, as in the night when the Feast of Passover is hallowed, and for gladness of heart, as the people that went to appear before the Lord three times in the year, with all kinds of instruments of song and the sound of the tabret; to go to the mountain of the Lord and to worship before the Lord, the Strength of Israel" (*Cf.* Isaiah xxx. 29; a paraphrase of the Hebrew text, and varies from the Targum, *i.l.*).

v. 2.—*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*

Solomon, the prophet, said: Blessed be the Name of the Lord, who hath given us the Law by the hand of Moses, the great Scribe—a Law inscribed upon the two tablets of stone, and hath given us the six orders of the Mischna and the Gemarah by oral tradition, and communed with us face to face, as a man that kisses his fellow out of the abundance of his affection, loving us, as He does, more than the seventy nations.

v. 3.—*Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance; thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the maidens love thee.*

At the noise of Thy miracles and Thy mighty deeds which Thou didst work for Thy people, the House of Israel, all the peoples did tremble, they who heard the report of Thy might, and Thy goodly signs; and Thy Holy Name was heard through the whole earth, more choice than much anointing which was applied to the heads of kings and priests. Therefore did the righteous ones love to follow in

Thy goodly path, so that they might possess both this world and the world to come.

v. 4.—*Draw me; we will run after thee; the king hath brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in thee. We will make mention of thy love more than wine; in uprightness do they love thee.*

As the children of the House of Israel departed from Egypt, the "Schechina" (Divine Presence) of the Lord of the Universe, led the way before them, by day with the pillar of cloud, by night with the pillar of fire. Whereupon the righteous of that generation exclaimed: "Sovereign of the Universe! we will be drawn after Thee, and run after Thy goodly way; so draw us nigh to the base of the mount Sinai, and give us Thy Law out of Thy treasure-chambers in Heaven. And we will rejoice and be glad with the twenty-two letters with which they are written; and we will make mention of them, and love Thy God-head, removing from after the idols of the nations; and all the righteous who serve in rectitude will fear Thee and love Thy statutes.

v. 5.—*I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

When the Israelites fashioned the Calf, their faces darkened as those of the children of Ethiopia, who dwell in the dwellings of Kedar: when they turned in penitence, and their guilt was pardoned, the brilliant radiance of their countenance increased as that of the angels; (this occurred) when they made the curtains for the Tabernacle, and the Divine Presence once again dwelt in their midst; when Moses, their Teacher, went up to Heaven, and brought about peace between them and their King.

v. 6.—*Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, because the sun hath scorched me. My mother's sons were incensed against me, they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

The Assembly of Israel addresses the nations thus:—Despise me not, in that I am darker than you; (it is) because I have done according to your actions, and bowed down to the sun and moon;

false prophets have been the cause of it, in order to draw down upon me the fury of the anger of the Lord: they taught me to worship your idols, and to walk according to your laws, whilst the Sovereign of the Universe, my own God, I did not serve; I did not go after His laws, nor did I keep His statutes, nor His Law.

v. 7.—*Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of thy companions?*

When the time arrived for Moses, the prophet, to depart from this world, he said before the Lord: It is revealed to me that this people will sin and be carried into captivity. Inform me, I pray Thee, how they will sustain themselves, and how they will live among the nations, whose decrees are as violent as the heat, yea, as the heat of the noonday sun in the summer solstice; inform me whither they shall be carried away among the flocks of the children of Esau and Ishmael, who associate with Thy Service their idol-worship.

v. 8.—*If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied unto Moses, the prophet:—

If the Assembly of Israel, compared to a beautiful child, desire to wipe out the captivity, and that my soul compassionate her, let her walk in the ways of the righteous, and let her arrange her supplications by the mouth of the pastors and leaders of the generation; let her instruct her children, compared to the kids of the goat, to repair to the House of Assembly and the House of Learning; then, by that merit, they will be sustained in exile, until I send their King, Messiah, who will lead them gently to their Dwelling-Place, the Temple, which David and Solomon, the shepherds of Israel, shall build for them.

v. 9.—*I have compared thee, O my love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots.*

When Israel departed from Egypt, Pharaoh and

his host pursued after them with chariots and horsemen, and the way was hemmed in for them on the four sides. On the right and left there was the wilderness, full of fiery serpents; behind them was the wicked Pharaoh with his hosts; before them was the Red Sea. What did the Almighty do? He revealed Himself in the fullness of His might at the sea, dried up the sea itself, whilst the mire He did not dry up. Whereupon the wicked ones, the mixed multitude of strangers among them, exclaimed: He is able to dry up the waters of the sea, but He is unable to dry up the mire. At that moment the anger of the Lord waxed against them, and He was about to drown them in the waters of the sea, in the same manner as Pharaoh and his host were drowned, had it not been for Moses, the prophet, who spread forth his hands before the Lord, and removed the anger of the Lord from them, while he and the righteous of that generation opened their mouths and sang songs, and they passed in the midst of the Red Sea on dry land, by virtue of the merit of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the beloved ones of the Lord.

v. 10.—*Thy cheeks are comely with plaits, thy neck with strings of jewels.*

Now when they went forth to the wilderness, the Lord spake unto Moses thus: How well adapted is this people, that I should give unto them the dictates of the Law, so that these might act as a bridle in their mouths, and they would not depart from the goodly path, just as the horse which has a bridle between its jaws does not depart (from the way)! And how fit is their neck to bear the yoke of My precepts, which would weigh upon them as the yoke upon the neck of the ox which ploughs in the field, and supports both himself and his master!

v. 11.—*We will make thee plaits of gold with studs of silver.*

Wherefore the word came unto Moses: Get thee up to the firmament, and I will give unto thee the two tablets of stone, hewn of the sapphire of My glorious throne, bright as pure gold, arranged in lines, written by My finger, upon which are chased the Ten Words, refined more than silver purified

seven times seven (corresponding to the number 49, that of the methods by which the subjects therein contained are interpreted), and I will give them by thy hand unto the people of the House of Israel.

v. 12.—*While the king sitteth at his table my spikenard sendeth forth its fragrance.*

But while Moses, their Teacher, was in the firmament, in order to receive the two tablets of stone, the Law and the Ordinance, the wicked ones of that generation arose and made the golden calf, yea, and the mixed multitude among them, and corrupted their actions, and there went forth against them an evil name in the world, whilst previously their odour went forth in the world as fragrance; after that their odour was bad as the spikenard, altogether evil-smelling, and the plague of leprosy came down upon their flesh.

v. 13.—*My beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh, lying between my breasts.*

At that time the Lord said unto Moses: Go, descend, for the people have corrupted themselves,

leave Me, and I will destroy them; whereupon Moses turned and besought compassion from the Lord, and the Lord remembered unto them the binding of Isaac, whose father bound him on Mount Moriah upon the altar, and the Lord turned from His anger, and suffered His Divine Presence to dwell in their midst as heretofore.

v. 14.—*My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna-flowers in the vineyards of En-gedi.*

Lo! then Moses descended, and the two tablets of stone in his hand; but through the sins of Israel his hands were heavy, and they fell and were broken; whereupon Moses went and crushed the calf, scattering its dust into the brook, and giving the Children of Israel to drink thereof, whilst he slew all those deserving of death, and ascended a second time into the Heavens, and prayed to God, offering an atonement for the Children of Israel.

It was then that he was commanded to make the tabernacle and the ark (of the covenant); then He instructed Moses, who made the tabernacle and all its vessels, including the ark; and he placed in the

ark the two later tablets, and appointed the sons of Aaron as priests, to bring the offering upon the altar, and to bring the oblation of wine in addition to the offering. But the question arises, Whence had they wine to bring as an oblation? Were they not in the wilderness? certainly no place fit for cultivation; nor had they figs, vines, nor pomegranates. Indeed, they went to the vineyards of En-gedi, and took thence clusters of grapes, and pressed wine out of them, and brought of it upon the altar as an oblation, the fourth part of a "hin" for each lamb.

v. 15.—*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair, thine eyes are as doves'.*

When the Children of Israel did the will of their King, He did praise them in the company of the holy angels, saying, How comely are thy actions, O beloved daughter, Assembly of Israel, in the hour when thou doest My will, engaging in the dictates of My Law! And how right are thy deeds and pursuits, just as pigeons, as the young of doves,

which are proper to be brought as an offering upon the altar!

v. 16.—*Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our couch is green.*

The Assembly of Israel replies to the Sovereign of the Universe, and says: How comely is Thy Holy Presence at the time that Thou dwellest in our midst, and receivest our petitions with favour; at the time that Thou causest love to dwell in the home ("couch") and many children to be upon the earth, we increasing and multiplying, as the tree which standeth by the spring of water, whose branches are fair, and whose fruit is plentiful!

v. 17.—*The beams of our house are cedars, our rafters are firs.*

Solomon, the prophet, speaketh: How beautiful is the Temple of the Lord, built at my hands, of cedar-wood; but more beautiful still shall be the Temple which shall once in time to come be builded in the days of King Messiah, the beams of which shall be of the cedars of the Garden of Eden, and the pillars of firs, juniper and cypress-wood.

## CHAPTER II.

v. 1.—*I am the narcissus of Sharon, the rose of the valleys.*

The Assembly of Israel speaketh: As long as the Sovereign of the Universe suffers His Divine Presence to dwell in my midst, I am like the narcissus fresh from the Garden of Eden, my actions are comely as the rose in the plain of the flower-garden of Eden.

v. 2.—*As the rose among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

But when I turn aside from the path straight before me, and He removeth His Holy Presence from me, I am likened to the rose that blossometh forth among the thorns, which pierce and tear the branches, in the same manner as I am pierced and torn by the evil decrees (endured) in exile at the hands of the kings of the nations.

v. 3.—*As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I de-*

*lighted to sit down under his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my palate.*

Just as the citron is comely and praised among the trees which do not produce, and all the world acknowledges it, so was the Lord of the Universe praised among the angels at the hour when He revealed Himself upon Mount Sinai, at the time when He gave the Law unto His people: at that time I longed to dwell under the shadow of His Presence, whilst the dictates of His Law were as spice to my palate, the reward for the observance of which was being laid up for me in the world to come.

v. 4.—*He brought me into the house of wine, and his banner over me was love.*

The Assembly of Israel saith: The Lord brought me to the House of the Seat of Learning for Israel on Sinai, that I might receive instruction in the Law by the mouth of Moses, the great Teacher; and I received the order of His Commandments in love, saying, All that the Lord has commanded I will do and hear.

v. 5.—*Stay ye me with raisins, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love.*

Now at the time when I heard His voice speaking out of the midst of the flame of fire, I quaked and trembled; and at last, out of fear, I approached Moses and Aaron, and said unto them: Receive ye the voice of the Words of the Lord out of the midst of the fire, and bring me to the House of Learning, and stay ye me with the Words of the Law, upon which the world rests as its foundation, and put chains upon my neck, explaining the holy expressions, which are as right to my palate as apples out of the Garden of Eden; yea, I will occupy myself with them; peradventure I may be healed by them, since I am sick with love.

v. 6.—*His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

Whilst the people of the House of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, they were surrounded by four clouds of glory on the four sides, so that the Evil Eye should have no power over them: one (cloud) was above them, so that neither the heat

of the sun, nor the rain and hail, might overpower them; and one encompassed them from below ("from the rear"), just as a nurse carries the babe in her bosom; one ran before them a journey of three days, to thrown down mountains and to set up camps; it killed all the poisonous snakes and scorpions of the desert, and spied out for them a place fit for habitation, so that they might engage in the study of the Law, which had been given them by the right hand of the Lord.

v. 7.—*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken the love, until it shall please.*

Thereupon Moses was informed by prophecy from the Lord to send messengers to spy out the land; and on returning from spying, they brought an evil report concerning the land of Israel, and were kept back for forty years in the wilderness. Then Moses opened his mouth and said: I adjure you, O Assembly of Israel, by the Lord of Hosts, and by the Strength of the land of Israel, that ye

presume not to go up to the land of Canaan, until it be the will of Heaven, and until all the generation of the men fit for war be completely extinct from out the camp; (not) as your brethren, the children of Ephraim, presumed, who, having left Egypt thirty years before the appointed term had arrived, fell into the hands of the Philistines dwelling in Gath, and were killed; but (I say) wait out the term of forty years, and then let your children go up and possess it (*scil.*, the land).

v. 8.—*The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh; leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

Saith Solomon, the King: While the people of the House of Israel were living in Egypt, their cry reached to heaven above, when lo and behold, the glory of the Lord was revealed unto Moses upon the mountain of Horeb, and He sent him into Egypt to redeem them and to bring them forth from under the bitter oppression of Egypt; and he leapt over to the term appointed for the sake of the merit of their Patriarchs, compared as they are to the moun-

tains, and skipped over 190 years of the time of servitude by virtue of the righteousness of the Mothers, likened to the hills.

v. 9.—*My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, looking in at the windows, glancing through the lattice.*

Saith the Assembly of Israel: At the time when in Egypt the glory of the Lord was revealed on the night of the Passover, and He slew every first-born, He rode upon a light cloud, and ran as a gazelle and a young antelope, protecting the houses wherein we were; and He was on the alert behind our wall, looking through the window, and peering through the lattice, and He saw the blood of the Passover-sacrifice and the blood of the command of the circumcision marked upon our door-posts, and He hastened from on high and saw His people eating of the Festival-sacrifice, roasted by fire, together with bitter herbs of diverse kinds and unleavened bread; and He had compassion with them, and did not suffer the Destroying Angel to do us any harm.

v. 10.—*My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

And in the morning my Friend began to say unto me: Arise, O Assembly of Israel, My beloved of old, beautiful in action, go forth, depart from the servitude of the Egyptians.

v. 11.—*For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.*

The term of servitude, like unto the winter, hath ceased, and the years concerning which I spake unto Abraham "between the parts" have been cut short, and the bitterness of the Egyptians compared to the incessant rain is over and gone, and ye shall no longer see them for ever.

v. 12.—*The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing (of birds)* ["*the time of pruning*"] *is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*

And there appeared Moses and Aaron, likened unto the palm-branches, who began to work miracles

in the land of Egypt; and the time for the slaying of the first-born had come, and the voice of the Holy Spirit of salvation, which I spake unto Abraham, your forefather (ye have heard already what I said unto him), viz.: "The nation which they shall serve I will judge, and afterwards they shall go forth with great substance." Now I desire to carry into action that which I have promised in word.

v. 13.—*The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

The Assembly of Israel, likened unto the first-fruits of the fig tree, opened her mouth and sang praises at the Red Sea; even children and sucklings praised with their tongues the Lord of the Universe; whereupon the Lord addressed them, saying: "Arise, O Assembly of Israel, My beautiful love, depart hence unto the land which I have promised unto thy fathers."

v. 14.—*O my dove, that art in the clefts of the*

*rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

And as wicked Pharaoh pursued after the Children of Israel, they resembled the dove, shut up in the clefts of the rock, with the snake worrying her from within, and the hawk from without. Thus was the Assembly of Israel shut in on all four sides: in front of them there was the sea, behind them the pursuing enemy, on both sides the desert full of deadly serpents, which wound and kill men by their poisonous sting. Immediately Israel opened its mouth in prayer before the Eternal, and the Bath-Kol proceeded from Heaven and proclaimed: "O thou Assembly of Israel, resembling the neat dove, enclosed in the hiding-place of the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs, show Me thy countenance and thy worthy deeds, and let Me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice in prayer (offered) in the smaller sanctuary, and thy countenance is comely by virtue of good actions."

v. 15.—*Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards; for our vineyards are in blossom.*

No sooner had they passed over the Red Sea, than they murmured on account of water, whereupon wicked Amalek came down upon them, he who of old owed them a grudge in consequence of the birthright and the blessing, of which Esau was deprived by Jacob, the Patriarch. He came to wage war with Israel, owing to their neglect of the precepts of the Torah, and stole from under the wings of the Cloud of Glory souls from the tribe of Dan, and killed them, inasmuch as the image of Micah was in their hands. At that time the House of Israel was doomed; likened as it was to a vineyard about to be destroyed, (it would have perished), had it not been for the righteous ones of that generation, compared to goodly perfume.

v. 16.—*My beloved is mine, and I am his: he who feedeth (his flock) among the roses.*

Thereupon they returned in repentance; and Moses, the prophet, was ready to pray before the

Eternal; Joshua, his servant, having been equipped was despatched from beneath the wings of the cloud of glory of the Eternal: with him heroes of righteousness, resembling the rose by their actions: and these waged war with Amalek, and crushed Amalek and his people by means of the anathema of God, and by death and destruction issuing from the decree of the sword.

v. 17.—*Until the day cooleth, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether ("division").*

A few days later the Children of Israel made the golden calf, and the cloud of glory which had protected them departed, and they were left exposed, deprived of the knowledge of the use of their arms, on which was inscribed the Great Name (of the Eternal), interpreted as comprising seventy names. God was now about to destroy them from off the earth, when He called to mind the covenant which He had once established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were as swift and eager in

their worship as a roe or a young hart, and He remembered the sacrifice which Abraham offered in Isaac, his son, on Mount Moriah. and when on a former occasion he had offered his sacrifice, and divided it equally (*cf.* Genesis xv. 10).

## CHAPTER III.

v. 1.—*By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*

Now when the people of the House of Israel saw that the cloud of glory had departed from them, that the crown of holiness which had been handed to them at Sinai had been taken from them, and that they were left in darkness as the night; and that when they sought the holy crown which had been removed from their midst, they found it not,—

v. 2.—*I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not.*

Then said the Children of Israel one to the other:

Let us rise now, and go about and encompass the appointed tent, which Moses has spread out without the camp, and let us seek instruction from before the Eternal, and seek the Divine Presence which has been removed from us: and they went about the cities, streets, and squares, but found not (what they sought).

v. 3.—*The watchmen that go about the city found me (to whom I said): Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*

And the Assembly of Israel exclaimed: Moses and Aaron, and the Levites who keep charge of the word of the appointed tent and encompass it round about, met me, and I enquired of them concerning the glorious Presence of the Lord which had departed from me; and Moses, the great Teacher of Israel, replied, and said: I will ascend unto the high Heavens and supplicate the Lord; peradventure He will forgive your guilt, and suffer His Presence to dwell among you as heretofore.

v. 4.—*It was but a little that I passed from them, when I found him whom my soul loveth: I held*

*him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

But a little time after, and the Eternal turned from His fierce anger, and bade Moses, the prophet, construct the appointed Tabernacle and the Ark, and He caused His Presence to dwell therein. The House of Israel then offered their sacrifices, and engaged in the study of the Law in the chambers of the House of Learning appointed by Moses, their Teacher, and in the class-rooms of Joshua, the son of Nun, his assistant.

v. 5.—*I adjure you, O daughter of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken the love, until it shall please . . .*

When the seven nations became aware of the fact that the Children of Israel were about to possess themselves of their land, they there and then rose and cut down the trees, and stopped the wells of water, and laid waste their cities, and fled. Then said the Almighty, blessed be He, unto Moses, the prophet: I promised unto the Patriarchs that I

would bring up their descendants to possess the land producing milk and honey; and now, see, I would have to bring their descendants to a land waste and void. I will now detain them forty years in the wilderness, (during which time) My Law will have become part of their very selves, and in the interval those wicked peoples will have built up what they have destroyed. In this sense Moses adjured the Israelites, saying: "I charge you by oath, O Assembly of Israel, before the Lord of Hosts, that ye stir not to go up to the land of the Canaanites until forty years shall have been completed, and it be God's will to deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and ye shall pass over the Jordan, and the land be subdued before you."

v. 6.—*Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, more than all powders of the merchant?*

Now when Israel did come up from the wilderness, and crossed the Jordan with Joshua, the son

of Nun, the peoples of the land exclaimed: What chosen people is this coming up from the wilderness, perfumed with sweet-smelling incense,—supported by the merit of Abraham, who worshipped and prayed before the Lord on Mount Moriah; anointed with the oil used by exalted personages, namely, with the righteousness of Isaac, bound as he was in the place of the Holy Temple, called the Mountain of Frankincense—a people in whose favour miracles have been wrought, through the piety of Jacob, with whom the angel wrestled until morning-dawn, and he prevailed; and he was thus delivered, and (through him) the twelve tribes.

v. 7.—*Behold, it is the couch of Solomon; three-score mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel.*

When Solomon, King of Israel, built the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, God exclaimed: How beautiful is this Temple, built by the hands of King Solomon, son of David! And how comely are the priests in the hour when they spread forth their hands, standing on the dais, in the act of pronouncing the blessing upon the people of Israel,

contained in the formula consisting of sixty letters, delivered unto Moses, their Teacher; by means of which they are strongly protected round about as by a high and strong wall, by virtue of which all the valiant men of Israel are strengthend, and do prosper.

v. 8.—*All of them clasping the sword, expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.*

The priests and the Levites, and the tribes of Israel, all take hold of the words of the Law, compared as it is to a sword, and they discuss it, as valiant men learned in warfare; and as regards each one of them, the sign of the covenant of Abraham (*Hebrew:* "circumcision") is upon their flesh, and by it they prevail, as a mighty man whose sword is girt upon his thigh, and in consequence thereof they have no fear of dangerous agents, or of the shades that prowl about by night.

v. 9.—*King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon.*

King Solomon built himself a holy Temple of

the (wood of the) ginger-tree, box, and cedar, which came from Lebanon, and he overlaid it with pure gold.

v. 10.—*He made the pillars thereof of silver, the support thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple, the midst thereof being inlaid with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem.*

After he had finished the building of it, he placed therein the Ark of the Testimony, which is the Pillar of the world; inside the Ark (he placed) the two tablets of stone, which Moses had hidden therein in Horeb, more precious than silver refined, more beautiful than the best gold; and spread out and covering it from above, was the curtain of blue and purple; and between the Cherubim, upon which was the lid (of the Ark), there dwelt the Divine Presence, whose Name resides in Jerusalem, chosen from all the cities of the land of Israel.

v. 11.—*Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

When King Solomon came to celebrate the dedi-

cation of the Temple, a herald went forth and proclaimed vociferously ("in the enclosure, termed *Chel*"): Come forth, O ye who dwell in the districts of the land of Israel, and ye people of Zion; come and see the crown and diadem with which the people of the House of Israel have crowned King Solomon on the day of the dedication of the Temple; and rejoice ye, with the joy of the Feast of Tabernacles which King Solomon celebrated at that time, the Feast extending over fourteen days.

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## CHAPTER IV.

v. 1.—*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil: thine hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead.*

Now on that day King Solomon sacrificed upon the altar a thousand burnt offerings, and his offering was accepted with favour by the Lord; whereupon the Bath-Kol proceeded from Heaven and

said: How comely art thou, O Assembly of Israel, and how comely are those leaders of the Assembly, and those wise men sitting in the Synhedrin, who for ever enlighten the people of Israel, resembling young pigeons; and even the rest of the children of thy Assembly, the people of the land, they are righteous as the sons of Jacob, who gathered stones and made a heap in the mountain of Gilead.

v. 2.—*Thy teeth are like a flock (of sheep) that are shorn, which are come up from the washing; all of whom are paired, and none of them bereaved.*

And how comely are the Priests and Levites, who bring thy offerings, and eat of the flesh of the holy (offering), and of the tithe, and the heave-offering, such gifts being pure, free from (the blemish of) compulsion or (the taint of) robbery, just as the flocks of Jacob's sheep were clean and pure at the time when they were shorn, and came up from Jaboc's brook; for among them there were none distrained and unlawfully gotten, all were similar one to the other, all bore twins each time, nor did

there exist among them any that were barren, or cast its young.

v. 3.—*Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely; thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate behind thy veil.*

And the lips of the High Priest uttered prayers on the Atonement-Day before the Lord, and his words had the effect of turning away the sins of Israel, which, appearing as the scarlet thread, were changed and became white as pure wool. As for the King at the head of all, he was as full of religious practices as the pomegranate, as well as the Overseers and Chiefs that stood in close relation to the King, who were righteous, and in whom there was no guile whatsoever.

v. 4.—*Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all the shields of the mighty men.*

As for the Head of the College, thy instructor, full of merit is he, and great in the performance of goodly actions, as was David, King of Israel;

upon that which issued from his lips depended the very structure of the world, for he was occupied with the instruction of the Law: thus confident and successful in war are the people of the House of Israel, as though seizing in their hands all kinds of implements used by mighty men.

v. 5.—*Thy two breasts are like two fawns, that are twins of a roe, which feed among the lilies.*

Thy two deliverers, who in time to come shall deliver thee, Messiah, son of David, and Messiah, son of Ephraim, may be compared to Moses and Aaron, sons of Jochabed, resembling two young roes, or twins of a gazelle; by their merit were the Children of Israel fed for forty years in the wilderness upon manna and rich fowl, and the waters of Miriam's well.

v. 6.—*Until the day cooleth, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

Now all the time that the House of Israel held fast to the methods of their pious forefathers, the agents and shades of danger fled from them, those

demons that roam about at morn or noon-tide; for the presence of the glory of the Lord was dwelling in the Temple built upon Mount Moriah; and these destructive and deadly agents would flee at the smell of the perfumed incense.

v. 7.—*Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no blemish in thee.*

And whilst the Israelites performed the will of the Lord of the Universe, He would praise them in the heavens on high, and say: Thou are all beautiful, O Assembly of Israel, there is no blemish in thee.

v. 8.—*With me from Lebanon, my bride, with me come from Lebanon; thou shalt look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.*

And He continued: With Me shall dwell the Assembly of Israel, likened to the modest maiden; and with Me shall they ascend unto the Holy House, whither the heads of the people shall bring thee gifts, they that inhabit the river Amana, and

they that dwell on the heights of the mountain of snow, and the peoples that are in Hermon; and tributes shall they bring unto thee who inhabit strong cities, mighty as lions; and offerings from cities (built) upon mountains, stronger even than leopards.

v. 9.—*Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, bride; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.*

Fixed upon the tablet of my heart is thy love, O my sister of the House of Israel, compared as thou art to the modest maiden: fixed upon the tablet of my heart is the love of the least among thee, righteous as one of the Chiefs of Synhedrin, and as one of the Kings of the House of Judah, upon whose neck was put the crown of sovereignty.

v. 10.—*How fair is thy love, my sister, bride! How much better is thy love than wine, and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!*

How beautiful unto me is thy affection, O my sister, Assembly of Israel, compared to the modest

bride! How goodly unto me is thy affection, more than that of the seventy nations; and as for the good name of thy righteous ones, it is more fragrant than all perfumes!

v. 11.—*Thy lips, O bride, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*

And during the hour in which the priests pray in the court of the Temple, their lips distil honey as from the comb, and thy tongue, O modest bride, with thy utterances of song and praise (imparts) sweetness as that of milk and honey, whilst the scent of the priests' garments is as the scent of frankincense.

v. 12.—*A closed garden is my sister, my bride; a closed spring, a fountain sealed.*

As for thy married women, they are as chaste as the modest bride, and like unto the Garden of Eden, upon which no man has permission to enter but those righteous ones whose souls are wafted thither by the hands of angels: as for thy

maidens, they are concealed and hidden in their chamber, and shut up like the spring of living water, which issued from beneath the Tree, and divided itself into four heads; and which had it not been sealed by (the fiat) of the Great and Holy Name, would, in issuing forth, have overflowed and overwhelmed the whole world.

v. 13.—*Thy shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with precious fruits; henna with spikenard plants.*

Regarding thy young men, rich in (the fulfilment of) precepts, like pomegranates, they are attached in love to their wives, and beget children righteous as themselves, and their odour resembles that of the pleasant spices of the Garden of Eden, camphire (or cypress) with spikenard.

v. 14.—*Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.*

Spikenard and saffron, and sweet-smelling calamus and cinnamon, with all the wood of incense,

pure myrrh and the wood of aloes, with all manner of spices.

v. 15.—*(With) a garden fountain, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

And the waters of Siloah flow gently with the rest of the waters that flow from Lebanon to water the land of Israel, by virtue of those who occupy themselves with the study of the Law, compared to the well of living waters; and by virtue of the oblation of water poured out upon the altar in the Temple, built in Jerusalem, which is called Lebanon.

v. 16.—*Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his precious fruits.*

Upon its northern side there was the Table, upon which were the twelve loaves of shew-bread; upon its south side there was the Candlestick to give light; and upon the altar did the priests offer the sacrifice, and upon it they brought the sweet-smel-

ling incense; the Assembly of Israel exclaiming: O that my beloved God might come to the Temple, and receive with favour the sacrifices of His people!

## CHAPTER V.

v. 1.—*I am come into my garden, my sister, bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, my friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!*

Then said the Holy One, blessed be He, unto His people of the House of Israel: I have come unto the Temple which Thou hast built unto Me, O my sister, Assembly of Israel, compared to the chaste bride! and I caused My Presence to dwell in your midst; I received with favour thy incense of spices which thou didst prepare for Me; I sent fire from Heaven, and it devoured thy burnt-offerings; and as for thy holy oblations, they were accepted favourably by Me, the oblation of red wine and of white wine, which the priests poured

out upon My altar. Now ye priests, who love My precepts, come and enjoy what is left of the sacrifices, and delight yourselves with the bounties which are ready for you.

v. 2.—*I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying: Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.*

After all these things, the people of the House of Israel committed iniquity, and He delivered them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and He led them into captivity; and in captivity they were like unto a man in slumber, who cannot be roused from his sleep. Here the voice of the Holy Spirit enlightened them by means of the prophets, and He would rouse them from the slumber of their hearts. The Lord of the Universe began, and said: Turn in repentance, open thy mouth, pray and praise me, O my sister, my love, Assembly of Israel, resembling the dove in the perfection of thy works, for the hair of my head is

full of thy tears, as a man the hair of whose head is soaked with the dew of Heaven; and the locks of my hair are filled with the drops from my eyes, as a man whose locks of hair are filled with raindrops that fall in the night.

v. 3.—*I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I soil them?*

Then answered the Assembly of Israel, and said to the prophets: I have in the past removed from me the yoke of His Commandments, and worshipped the idols of the nations; how then can I have the face to return unto Him?

The Sovereign of the Universe replied unto them by the prophets: As for me, I have already removed My Presence from your midst, how then can I return, seeing that you have done evil things? And I have made clean My feet from thy uncleanness, how then can I suffer them to be sullied in your midst through your wicked actions?

v. 4.—*My beloved drew his hand from the hole (of the door), and my heart was moved for him.*

When it was made clear to the Eternal that the

people of the House of Israel were not willing to repent and to return to Him, He stretched forth the stroke of His might upon the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh upon the other side of Jordan, and delivered them into the hand of Sennacherib, King of Assyria, and he caused them to be carried captive unto Lahlah and Habor, rivers of Gozan, and to the cities of Media; and took from their hands the molten calf which wicked Jeroboam set up in Leshem Dan, which is called Pamios, in the days of Pekah, son of Remaliah: and when I heard of these things My bowels were moved for them.

v. 5.—*I rose to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with liquid myrrh, upon the handles of the bolt.*

And as the mighty stroke of the Eternal was heavy upon me, I was astounded at my actions; then the priests brought the sacrifice and offered up sweet-smelling incense; but it was not accepted with favour, for the Lord of the Universe closed the doors of repentance in my face.

v. 6.—*I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. My soul had departed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he answered me not.*

The Assembly of Israel exclaimed: I desired to ask instruction from the Eternal, but He had removed His Presence from me; my soul longed for the voice of His Word, I sought the presence of His glory, but I found it not; I prayed unto Him, but He covered the heavens with clouds and would not receive my prayer.

v. 7.—*The watchmen that go about the city found me; they smote me; they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.*

The Chaldeans overtook me, they that guard the ways, and they pressed me sore round about the city of Jerusalem; some of my people they slew with the sword, others they took into captivity; they took the royal crown from off the neck of Zedekiah, King of Judah, bringing him into Rivlah, and they put out his eyes, these people from

Babylon, who harassed the city and guarded the walls.

v. 8.—*I adjure you, O daughter of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick through love.*

The Assembly of Israel replies: I adjure you, O prophets, by the decree of Heaven, should your lover perchance show himself unto you, tell me, for I am sick on account of the love of my friend.

v. 9.—*What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so adjure us?*

The prophets answered and said unto the House of Israel: Which God dost thou wish to serve, O Assembly of Israel, thou fairest among peoples? Who is the One whom thou desirest to fear, that thou hast thus bound us?

v. 10.—*My beloved is white and ruddy, marked out by a banner among ten thousand.*

Then began the Assembly of Israel to think of

the praise of the Lord of the Universe, and said: That God do I desire to serve who, day by day, is enveloped in a robe white as snow, occupied with the 24 books of the Law, and with the words of the Prophets and Writings, and by night with the six Orders of the Mischna; and the splendour of whose countenance radiates as fire, on account of the magnitude of the wisdom and the judgment adduced in the task of seizing upon new arguments day by day, such as He will in the future publish unto His people on the Great Day; while His banner (waves) over myriads of angels who minister before Him.

v. 11.—*His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are heaps of curls, and black as a raven.*

As for His Law, it is more desirable than pure gold; and as for the interpretation of the Words (of the Law), there are stored up within them heaps of grounds for precepts; to those who keep them, they are white as snow, and to those who do not observe them, they are like the face of the raven.

v. 12.—*His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks; washed with milk, and fitly set.*

His eyes are constantly directed towards Jerusalem, to do good unto her and to bless her, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year; like unto doves that stand directing their eyes to the streams of water. (This is done) in return for the merit of those who sit (assembled) in the Synhedrin, engaged in the study of the Law, making justice flow (so that it glide) smoothly like milk, and of those who are seated in the House of Study, being circumspect in judgment, and determining whom to acquit and whom to condemn.

v. 13.—*His cheeks are like a bed of spices, as towers of perfumes: his lips are as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh.*

The two tablets of stone which He gave to His people were written on ten lines, similar to the lines in a garden of spices—their (contents) abounded in subtleties and reasons, like a flower-garden full of perfumes: and as for the lips of his scholars engaged

in the Law, they distil taste on every side, while the word issuing from their mouths is as choice myrrh.

v. 14.—*His hands are as rings of gold set with "Tarshish"; his body is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*

The (names of the) twelve tribes of his servant Jacob were enrolled upon the (breast) plate—the golden ornament of holiness, engraven upon twelve gems, together with (the names of) the three Patriarchs of the world, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Reuben was engraven on ruby,* Simeon on a cornelian, Levi on earthy corundum, Judah was engraven on a stibium-coloured stone, Issachar on emerald, Zebulun on diamond, Dan on a beryl, Napthali on a sapphire, Gad on topaz, Asher on "Tarshish"-stone, Joseph was engraven on malachite, Benjamin on jasper. They were like the twelve signs of the Zodiac, illumining like a lantern, bright in their effect as ivory ("elephant's tooth"), and shining as glittering jewels ("sapphires").

* The rendering of the names of the various precious stones is but tentative. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, in spite of all available knowledge on the subject, to determine exactly the names of these gems.

v. 15.—*His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*

As regards the righteous, they are the pillars of the world, resting on supports of fine gold, namely, those Words of the Law in which they are practised, and by means of which they instruct the people of the House of Israel to carry out His Will; whilst, on the other hand, He is filled with compassion towards them as the Ancient One, and changes into the whiteness of snow the guilt of the House of Israel. He, too, who in days to come, will bring about a triumphant war against the nations who transgress His Will, like unto a young and mighty warrior, strong as the cedar.

v. 16.—*His mouth (palate) is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

The words of His palate are sweet as honey, and all His Commandments are more desirable to His wise men than gold and silver. This is the praise

of God, my Beloved, and this is the strength of the Lord, my Friend, O ye prophets, preaching in Jerusalem!

## CHAPTER VI.

v. 1.—*Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither hath thy beloved turned him, that we may seek him with thee?*

When the prophets heard the praise of the Eternal from the mouth of the Assembly of Israel, they answered and said: For what sin has the Divine Presence withdrawn from thee, thou, whose conduct has been more beautiful than that of all nations; and whither has thy Beloved turned, at the time that He removed from thy sanctuary? The Assembly of Israel replied: For the sins of rebellion and sedition which were found in me. And the prophets rejoined; Now, then, return in repentance, and let both yourselves and we rise and pray unto Him, and implore mercy together.

v. 2.—*My beloved has gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather roses.*

Then the Lord of the Universe received their prayers favourably, and went down into Babylon to the Synhedrin of wise men, and gave release unto His people, and brought them up out of their exile by the hands of Cyrus, Ezra, and Nehemiah, Zerubabel, the son of Shealtiel, and the old men of Judah. And they built the Temple, and appointed the priests over the sacrifice, and the Levites over the charge of the Holy Word; and God sent fire from Heaven, and accepted in favour the sacrifices and the incense of spices. And in like manner as a man feeds his beloved son with delicacies, thus did He indulge them, and as a man who gathers roses on the plain, so did He gather them from Babylon.

v. 3.—*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; he who feedeth among the roses.*

And in that day I worshipped my Beloved, the Lord of the Universe, and my Beloved suffered

His holy Presence to dwell in my midst, and feed me with delights.

v. 4.—*Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as bannered hosts.*

The Eternal spake: How comely art thou, My love, at the time when thou art desirous of doing My will! Beautiful is the Temple which thou hast built unto Me, as was the first Temple which King Solomon built for Me in Jerusalem. Thy dread, too, is upon all the peoples, as in the day on which thy four regiments marched in the wilderness.

v. 5.—*Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.*

Thy teachers, the wise men of the Great Assembly, went round about Me, they who consulted Me during exile, and they appointed seats of learning for the instruction of My Law; and the rest of thy scholars and the people of the land approved by the word of their mouths, as the sons of Jacob, who gathered the stones and made them into a heap in the mount of Gilead.

v. 6.—*Thy teeth are like a flock (of sheep) which are come up from the washing; all of whom are paired, and none of them bereaved.*

The Priests and the Levites ate of thy sacrifices, of the tithe, and thy waive-offering—free from all taint of an enforced or stolen gift, as pure as were the flocks of Jacob's sheep, at the time when they came up from the brook of Jaboc, all being similar one to the other, bearing twins on every occasion, and among which there were none who cast their young or who were barren.

v. 7.—*Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind thy veil.*

And the royal house of the Hasmoneans was all filled with (the performance of) the Commandments as the pomegranate; and as for Mattathias himself, the High Priest, and his sons, they were more righteous than all of them, and with thirsty longing did they carry out the words and precepts of the Law.

v. 8.—*There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and maidens without number.*

Then there arose the Greeks. and gathered together sixty kings from the children of Esau, clothed in mail, riding upon horses, and horsemen, and eighty dukes of the children of Ishmael, riding upon elephants, besides those of other peoples and tongues without number, and they appointed King Alexander as the chief over them, and came to wage war against Jerusalem.

v. 9.—*My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her. Daughters saw her and called her blessed; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*

Now at that time the Assembly of Israel, resembling a perfect dove, was serving her Sovereign Lord with one heart, and cleaving to the Law, busy with the practice of its ordinances with a perfect heart, and their merit was clear as on the day of the Exodus from Egypt. On this account, when the

Hasmoneans with Mattathias and all the people of Israel came forth and engaged in battle with them, the Eternal delivered the enemy into their hands; and as the inhabitants of the districts saw this, they blessed them, and the kings of the land and the rulers praised them.

v. 10.—*Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as bannered hosts?*

The nations exclaimed: How brilliant are the deeds of this people, even as the morning-dawn! Her youths are beautiful as the moon, and her deserts bright as the sun, whilst the dread of her was upon all the inhabitants of the land, at the time when she went forth in the wilderness in four regiments.

v. 11.—*I went down into the garden of nuts to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower.*

The Lord of the Universe spake: In the second Temple, built by the hands of Cyrus, I caused My

Presence to dwell, in order to see the goodly actions of My people, to see if perchance the wise men had increased and multiplied, those compared to the vine, and if their scions were full of good deeds like the pomegranates.

v. 12.—*Or ever I was awake, my soul made me as the chariots of Ammi-nadib.*

And when it became manifest to the Lord that they were righteous, and engaged in the study of the Law, the Lord said: I will no longer smite them, nor will I make an end of them, but I shall consider within Myself how I may deal kindly with them, to place them on high in the company of kings, for the sake of the merits of the righteous of the generation, resembling in their actions Abraham, their fore-father.

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## CHAPTER VII.

v. 1.—*Return, return, O Shulammite; return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see*

*in the Shulammite? As it were the dance (defilement) of two camps?*

Return unto Me, O Assembly of Israel, return unto Jerusalem, return unto the House of the instruction of the Law, return to receive prophecy from the prophets, who preach in the Name of the Lord! What boots it you, O ye false prophets, to mislead the people of Jerusalem by means of your messages of prophecy, which you speak in rebellion against the Lord, and to defile the camp of Israel and Judah?

v. 2.—*How beautiful are thy feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.*

Solomon spake in the spirit of prophecy before the Lord: How beautiful are the feet of Israel as they go up to appear before the Lord three times in the year, in sandals of badger's skin, as they bring their vows and free-will offerings, while their children—that come out of their loins—are comely as the sparkling gems set in the Crown of Holi-

ness, which Bezaleel, the cunning workman of Aaron, the Priest, fashioned.

v. 3.—*Thy navel is like a round goblet, wherein no mingled wine is wanting; thy body is like an heap of wheat set about with roses.*

The Head of thy College (thy Tribunal of the Sanhedrin), through whose meritorious influence the whole world is sustained—like as a fœtus is sustained by the navel in its mother's womb—sparkles with (the knowledge of) the Law, as the disc of the moon, when he goes forth to pronounce pure or impure, innocent or guilty; the words of the Law are never wanting from his mouth, just as the waters of the great River, which issued from Eden, never fail: and seventy wise men round about him, "like a round threshing-floor"; their stores are ever filled with the sacred tithe, the vow and the free-will offering, which had been fixed for them by Ezra, the priest, Zerubabel and Joshua, Nehemiah and Mordecai Bilshan, the men of the Great Synagogue, resembling roses; (this was done) in order to enable (the scholars) to occupy them-

selves with the study of the Law by day and by night.

v. 4.—*Thy two breasts are like two fawns, that are twins of a roe.*

Thy two redeemers that shall in time to come redeem thee, Messiah, son of David, and Messiah, son of Ephraim, are like Moses and Aaron, sons of Jochabed, resembling two fawns, twins of a roe.

v. 5.—*Thy neck is like the tower of ivory; thine eyes as the pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose ("face") is like the tower of Lebanon, which looketh towards Damascus.*

As for the Father of the Beth-din, who tries thy law-suits, he has the power with the people to compel them (to comply), and to exact punishment from him pronounced guilty by law, as King Solomon had, who built a tower of ivory, and subdued the people of the House of Israel, and brought them back to the Lord of the Universe. Thy Scribes are filled with wisdom, as channels of water, and they have the knowledge to fix the reckonings of

intercalary months, making leap years, and determining new moons, and the commencement of the year at the gate of the House of the Great Synhedrin. The Chief of the family of the House of Judah is like unto King David, who built the fort of Zion, termed "the tower of Lebanon," so that all who stand upon it may count all the towers which are in Damascus.

v. 6 - *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like the purple of a king bound in the tresses.*

The King appointed head over thee is as righteous as Elijah the prophet, who showed his zeal for the God of Heaven, and slew the false prophets in Mount Carmel, and restored the people of the House of Israel to the fear of the Lord God. As for the poor among the people, who walk with bowed head, because they are in want, these shall in time to come be clothed in purple, as Daniel in the city of Babylon and Mordecai in Sushan were clothed, through the merit of Abraham, who in days of old ascribed Sovereignty to the Lord of the

Universe, through the piety of Isaac, whom his father bound for the purpose of sacrifice, and through the saintliness of Jacob, who "peeled the rods in the watering-troughs."

v. 7.—*How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights?*

King Solomon said: How beautiful art thou, O Assembly of Israel, at the time when thou bearest the yoke of my kingdom, at the time when I chasten thee with afflictions for thy misdeeds, and thou receivest them lovingly, they appearing in thy sight as delights.

v. 8.—*This, thy stature, is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters (of grapes).*

(How beautiful art thou) at the time when thy priests spread forth their hands in prayer, and pronounce the blessing upon their brethren of the House of Israel—their outspread hands resembling the branches of a palm-tree, and their stature as a date-tree, whilst (the members of) thy congregation stand facing the priests, their countenances bent downwards to earth, as a cluster of grapes.

v. 9.—*I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the branches thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy breath (face) as apples.*

Then said God: Let me go and try Daniel, and see whether he will be able to stand this trial, as Abraham, compared to the palm-branch, stood the ten trials; and I would also prove Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, to see whether they can stand their trials. I will (then) redeem, for their sakes, my people of the House of Israel, compared to clusters of grapes; and the fame of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah shall be noised about in all the earth, and their odour shall be wafted as the fragrance of the apples of the garden of Eden.

v. 10.—*And thy mouth (palate) as the best wine that goeth down smoothly for my beloved, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.*

Said Daniel and his companions: We will take upon ourselves the decree of Heaven, even as Abraham, our father, took it upon himself, he who re-

sembled old wine; and we shall walk in the paths marked out for us from before, even as the prophets Elijah and Elisha walked, they on whose account the dead, like a slumbering man, rose; and as Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, the priest (walked), by reason of whose prophecy the sleeping dead were roused, they in the valley of Durah.

v. 11.—*I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

Jerusalem spake: Whilst I walk in the way of the Lord of the Universe, He suffers His Divine Presence to dwell in my midst, and His longing is towards me; but when I turn rebelliously from His way He removes His Presence from me, and carries me away among the nations, who rule over me, as a man who rules over his wife.

v. 12.—*Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.*

When the people of the House of Israel sinned, the Eternal carried them away captive to the land of Seir, the field of Edom; and the Assembly of

Israel exclaimed: We pray unto Thee, Lord of all the world, receive my supplication which I now pray before Thee in the cities of exile, and in the tracts of the countries of the nations.

v. 13.—*Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see whether the vine has budded, and its blossom be open, and the pomegranates be in flower: then will I give thee my love.*

And the Children of Israel said one to another: Let us rise up early in the morning and go to the Synagogue and to the House of Learning, and search diligently in the Book of the Law, and see whether the time of the salvation of the House of Israel—likened unto the vine—has come, so that they may be redeemed from their captivity. Let us consult the Sages, too, whether the merit of the righteous—filled with (God's) precepts as a pomegranate—is revealed before the Lord, whether the term has been reached for going up to Jerusalem, there to give praise to the God of Heaven, and to bring the burnt-offering and the holy oblation.

v. 14.—*The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and at our doors are all manner of precious (fruits), new and old, which I laid up for thee, O my beloved.*

And when it shall be God's will to redeem His people from captivity, it shall be told unto King Messiah, saying: The term of the exile has been completed, and the merit of the righteous has given forth its fragrance before Me, (sweet) as the smell of balsam, whilst the Sages of the generations have been constant in their attendance at the gates of Learning, engaged in the study of works and in the words of the Law. Come now, rise and receive the Kingdom which I have reserved for thee!

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## CHAPTER VIII.

v. 1.—*O thou that wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, they would not despise me.*

And at the time when King Messiah appears

to the Assembly of Israel, these will say unto Him: Come, be a brother unto us, and let us go up to Jerusalem; let us, together with you, suck (and taste) of the Law, as a suckling sucks his mother's breast; for all the time that I was carried about, away from my own land, as long as I called to mind the Name of the Great God, and gave up my very life for the sake of His God-head, even the peoples of the earth did not despise me.

v. 2.—*I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me; I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate.*

I will lead thee, O King Messiah, and bring thee up to my Temple; and thou shalt teach me to fear the Lord, and to walk in His way; and there we shall partake of a feast on Leviathan, and drink old wine which has been preserved in the grape since the days of Creation, and eat of pomegranate and fruits which have been prepared for the righteous in the Garden of Eden.

v. 3.—*His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.*

The Assembly of Israel (continues): I am the chosen one of all peoples—I who bind the phylacteries on my left hand and upon my head, and fix the Muzuzah to the right side of my door, at the height of a third from the lintel, so that no dangerous agent can have the power and permission to do me harm.

v. 4.—*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awaken the love, until it shall please.*

King Messiah will say: I adjure you, O my people of the House of Israel, why do ye war against the peoples of the earth to leave the exile? And why do ye rebel against the forces of Gog and Magog? Stay here a little longer, until the peoples who have come up to wage war against Jerusalem shall be destroyed; and after that the Lord of the Universe will remember unto you the love of the righteous, and it will be His will to redeem you.

v. 5.—*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple-tree I awakened thee; there thy mother was in travail with thee, there was she in travail that brought thee forth.*

Solomon the prophet said: When the dead will rise, the Mount of Olives shall be rent asunder, and all Israel's dead will issue from beneath it; and even those righteous ones who have died in exile, will come from under the earth by way of caverns and issue forth from beneath the Mountain of Olives. As regards the wicked who shall have died and been buried in the land of Israel, these shall be cast up as a man throws up a stone with a club. Then shall all the inhabitants of the earth say, and enquire: What was the merit of this people, myriads upon myriads of whom have come up out of the earth, as on the day when they came up out of the wilderness unto the land of Israel, and who delight themselves with the love of their Lord, as on the day when they were seen at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Law? At that hour Zion—the mother of Israel—shall bear her

children, and Jerusalem shall receive her captive sons.

v. 6.—*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, a most vehement flame.*

On that day shall the Children of Israel say unto their Lord: We beseech Thee, set us as the seal of a ring upon Thine heart, as the seal of a ring upon Thine arm, so that we shall never again be exiled; for strong as death is the love of Thy God-head, and powerful as Gehinnom is the jealousy which the nations bear against us; and the enmity which they harbour against us is as the coals of the fire of Gehinnom, which the Eternal created on the last day of Creation, wherewith to burn the worshippers of strange worship.

v. 7.—*Many waters cannot quench the love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

The Lord of the World says unto His people

of the House of Israel: Even though all the nations, compared as they are to the waters of the Great Sea, were to gather themselves together, they could not quench the love which I bear you; and even though all the kings of the earth, likened unto the river flowing with a strong (current), were to join together, they could not blot you out of the world. And if a man were to give all the substance of his house in order to acquire wisdom during the captivity, I would restore it unto him in double portion in the world to come, whilst all the spoil which men would take from the camp of Gog would be his also.

v. 8.—*We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the days when she shall be spoken for?*

At that time shall the angels of Heaven say one to the other: We have one people on earth whose merit is clear, but it has no leaders to go forth and wage war with the camp of Gog. What are we to do for (this) our sister in the day when the nations shall speak about going up against her to battle?

v. 9.—*If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver; and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.*

Then shall Michael, Israel's chief, say: If she be as ready as a wall among the nations, (prepared) to give silver for the acquisition of the Unity of God's Name, then shall I and you be with their Teachers, encompassing them as scaffoldings of silver, and the nations shall have no power to rule over her, just has the reptile has no power to rule over silver. And even though she be destitute of precepts, we shall implore on her behalf mercy from Heaven, and the merit of the Law which the young study shall He remember unto her—written as it is upon the tablet of the heart, ready as a cedar to oppose the nations.

v. 10.—*I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found peace.*

The Assembly of Israel says in reply: I am strong as a wall in the performance of the Law's precepts, and my sons are stout as a tower. Then shall the Assembly find favour in the eyes of the

Lord, and all the inhabitants of the earth shall seek her welfare.

v. 11.—*Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon: he let out the vineyard unto keepers; everyone for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*

A people came up by lot unto the Lord of the Universe, and peace was with her, compared, as she was, to a vineyard. He settled her in Jerusalem, and delivered her into the hands of Kings of the House of David, that they might guard her, just as the gardener takes care of a vineyard. After the death of Solomon, King of Israel, she was left in the hand of Rehoboam, his son; whereupon Jeroboam, son of Nebat, came and divided the kingdom with him, leading away from him the ten tribes, according to the word uttered by the mouth of Ahijah, of Shiloh, who was a great man.

v. 12.—*My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.*

When Solomon, King of Israel, heard the pro-

phecy of Ahijah of Shiloh, he rushed to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam fled from before Solomon and went to Egypt. At that hour it was told unto King Solomon by prophecy that he would rule over the ten tribes all his days, but that after his death Jeroboam, son of Nebat, would rule over them, while Rehoboam, son of Solomon, would rule over the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin.

v. 13.—*Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken for thy voice: cause me to hear it.*

Solomon, at the end of his prophecy, remarks: In time to come the Lord of the Universe shall say unto the Assembly of Israel at the end of days: O thou Assembly of Israel, compared to a little garden among the nations, seated in the House of Learning with your associates of the Synhedrin, and the remainder of the people who listen to the voice of the Head of the College, and learn from his mouth the words (of the Law), cause ye me to hear the voice of Thy words at the time when Thou sittest to pronounce (the judgment of)

"not guilty" or "guilty," and I shall approve all that Thou hast done.

v. 14.—*Flee away, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

At that time the Elders of the Assembly of Israel shall say: O my Beloved, Lord of the Universe, flee from this polluted earth, and let Thy Presence dwell in the high heavens; and in times of trouble, when we shall pray unto Thee, be Thou like a hart, which, while it sleeps, has one eye closed and one eye open, or like a young roe, which, in running away, looks back. So look upon us and regard our pain and affliction from the high heavens, until such time when Thou shalt be pleased with us and redeem us, and bring us up to the mountain of Jerusalem, where the priests shall burn before Thee the frankincense of spices.

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